



United States Department of the Interior NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve
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Copper Center, AK 99573-0439
907 822 5234 Fax 907 822 7216
<http://www.nps.gov/wrst>



December 8, 2016

Dear Interested Party:

The National Park Service (NPS) is proposing to re-route and improve a section of the Copper Lake Trail in Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST). This proposed action is a result of the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Nabesna Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (ORV EIS), which was signed in 2011. The 2011 Record of Decision identified management actions to improve, re-route, and reconstruct degraded segments of several motorized trails off of the Nabesna Road, including the Copper Lake Trail, to create a sustainable or maintainable condition and provide reasonable access while protecting scenic quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and other park resource values. The Copper Lake Trail is primarily used by federally qualified subsistence users to access the Black Mountain area for hunting moose and Dall sheep. The trail has been and will continue to be closed to recreational ORV use.

Trail improvements on the Copper Lake Trail started in 2012 and have consisted of hardening with gravel, geo-block, and dura-deck; ditch-and-elevate techniques; and re-routes to the more durable gravel substrate of the Copper River floodplain. Currently, approximately 12 miles of trail improvements have been completed up to the bluff above Copper Creek. The existing alignment of the trail crosses through a private inholding along Copper Creek. The strategy outlined in the 2011 ROD was to obtain an easement through the private land to address trespass issues. NPS efforts at obtaining an easement have not been successful. Consequently, the improved trail must now bypass the private land in order to avoid trespass issues.

The proposed re-route will avoid the private inholding and construct approximately 1.5 miles of trail. Construction of the trail will consist of trail hardening using dura-deck, full-bench trail construction down a wooded bluff using a small dozer and/or mini-excavator, and construction of a 40' bridge across Copper Creek, which is an anadromous stream. After the bridge construction across Copper Creek, the trail will be routed to connect with the original trail alignment outside of the private property boundary. Once the trail re-route and improvements are complete, old degraded trail segments will be closed to all ORV use to avoid passing through the private inholding and to allow vegetation and wetland recovery. The trail will also be monitored to ensure that it provides adequate tread utility along a single alignment.

Implementation of the proposed re-route and trail improvements as described above require additional public involvement because they were not addressed through public engagement in the 2011 ORV EIS/ROD. It is anticipated that an Environmental Assessment will be utilized for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, tiered off the 2011 ORV EIS.

This letter serves as a notice to interested stakeholders regarding the proposed re-route and trail improvements to the Copper Lake Trail not covered in the 2011 ORV EIS/ROD. This is an opportunity

to submit comments on the proposal. Your comments will be used to identify issues and to develop alternatives to the proposal. You can submit comments in one of several ways:

- Electronically by going to the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website at: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=68477>. Comments should be submitted in regards to the public scoping letter that is posted on this site. You can submit comments directly on the site.
- Comments can be e-mailed to: Morgan_gantz@nps.gov
- Comments can be submitted through the mail to: Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve; ATTN: Morgan Gantz; P.O. Box 439; Copper Center, Alaska 99573

Please submit comments no later than January 13, 2016.

Thank you for your interest and participation.

Sincerely,



Ben Bobowski
Superintendent

